

# Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Bob Papp's State of the Coast Guard Address

February 27, 2013

## ***Forward...to the Horizon***

I am a Coast Guardsman...I stand the watch...I scan the horizon for signs of friend or foe, squall or calm, shoals or deep water, challenges and opportunities...always vigilant. I stand here this morning to report on the State of our Coast Guard. As we look to the horizon, I have great confidence and optimism about where we are today... and where we are headed.

Many of you who have been following the news headlines about the economy or the budget, or have listened to me talk about uncertain and stormy seas, may wonder about the source of my confidence and optimism. Well, take a look around you. You'll see the reason....

It's you. It's your Shipmates.  
It's the men and women of the Coast Guard.  
It's Coast Guardsmen.  
My "Coasties".

And if you want to know why our men and women inspire that confidence – in spite of the challenges we are facing – look no farther than our response to Hurricane Sandy just four months ago.

Sandy was the largest Atlantic Hurricane we've ever seen. It brought terrible destruction to an area that rarely sees such storms, and even as I speak, it continues to impact the lives of many people. But I have never been more proud of our Service – or seen more clearly the value we provide to the American people.

How Hurricane Sandy tested the Coast Guard, and our ability to respond to that test, provides a clear example of our value to the nation.

First... we were *ready*. In advance of the storm, our Captains of the Port in each Sector worked within the interagency, our DHS components, and with industry to ensure the ports were secured.

We used Rescue 21 and the Automated Identification System – AIS – to locate vessels that might be in the path of the storm and to warn them. Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons – EPIRB's – are required to be carried aboard commercial vessels. We used them to create a maritime "reverse 911" system to

call vessel owners and ensure they were making necessary preparations. We conducted over-flights of the commercial fishing fleets, to ensure they were aware of the storm's approach, and were headed for safe harbor.

We began preparing for the Search and Rescue cases our long experience told us would follow the storm.

In the New York area alone, we responded to over 80 EPIRB hits in 24 hours. And the storm didn't just affect New York. We responded to cases from Florida to Maine.

One of those cases was the sailing vessel HMS BOUNTY, which foundered and sank at the height of the storm off the coast of North Carolina. Air crews from Air Station Elizabeth City plucked 14 crew members from the raging seas that night. Unfortunately, one BOUNTY crew member did not survive... the Captain was never recovered.

I met with those air crews after the rescue, and even the most experienced aviators told me these were the roughest conditions they had ever flown in.

Aviation Survival Technician Second Class Randy Haba was one of those crewmen and the first rescue swimmer on scene. Once the BOUNTY survivors were located, eighty nautical miles off-shore, he deployed from the helicopter into the darkness and spent the next *hour* swimming through 30 foot seas, 60 knot winds, and torrential rain. He rescued the first five crew members.

At Sector North Carolina Senior Chief Operations Specialist Christine Lepere, the Command Center Supervisor, directed the operations as the Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator. In addition to the two helicopters and the C-130 from Air Station Elizabeth City, an HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft, the Cutter GALLATIN and the Cutter ELM were also involved in the 4 day search of over 10,000 square miles of ocean trying to locate the missing Captain.

This year we completed the field level reorganization to Sectors. The wisdom of those efforts was demonstrated during this storm by watching all elements of Response and Prevention and Logistics work together during our operations.

The dramatic rescue that dark night was not just the result of the heroism of those who answered the call. Our efforts – over decades – advocating for and advancing prevention standards have ensured vessels carry emergency equipment that gives them the chance to survive if disaster strikes.

The crew of BOUNTY had a working EPIRB. They had survival suits, marine radios, and working life rafts. Because they did, fourteen were able to stay alive until rescuers arrived.

Mr. Alex Weller, the Senior Prevention Attorney for the Office of Maritime and International Law, is a Coast Guardman who has spent decades fighting for those safety standards and developing and supporting our rule-making initiatives. He has been a leading voice on improving vessel safety and security, merchant marine credentialing, and pollution prevention.

You won't see his efforts portrayed on the Weather Channel's Coast Guard series, but on the other hand... the best search and rescue case just might be the one we prevent.

It is on these two pillars of Coast Guard operations – Prevention and Response – that the success of our service has always rested.

As clear skies appeared on the horizon and the storm passed – as all storms eventually do – over 800 Coast Guardsmen – active, reserve, civilian and Auxiliary – from units all over the country arrived to assist those in the impacted areas.

We worked with other DHS components, such as FEMA and Customs and Border Protection, as well as other government agencies, the Department of Defense – including the Army Corps of Engineers – to lead the recovery and reopening of ports along the mid-Atlantic coast, to restore the vital movement of commerce. We responded to, and investigated, more than 500 spills of oil or hazardous materials in the Port of New York and New Jersey, including three major spills totaling almost half a million gallons. And we established a multi-agency response organization which oversaw 1500 personnel covering 1,200 miles of shoreline.

After the rescues, and reconstitution of our own units and commands, our first job was to work with industry and state and local partners to re-open the port and re-establish the marine transportation system. It was critical to get commerce flowing again as soon as possible – especially fuel: jet fuel for planes, home heating oil, and gasoline for filling stations.

CDR Linda Sturgis led our Marine Transportation System Recovery Unit in that effort. Working initially, with no power, no computers, no phones, and limited cell coverage, they worked wonders. They surveyed vital shipping channels, evaluated affected waterfront facilities, and through preparation, interagency communication, and tireless efforts, they were able to get ships and barges flowing in less than 36 hours to enable the port to resume fuel and cargo distribution.

Our Atlantic Strike Team deployed to the New York bight area. They were brought in after the storm surge flooded the Brooklyn Battery tunnel, severing a vital transportation artery into the city.

Finding existing efforts to dewater and open the tunnel slow and ineffective, Chief Damage Controlman Broko Boland led a team of 30 Strike Team members to build and employ a innovative system capable of pumping water seven stories straight up through the tunnel's ventilation shaft. Working around the clock, Chief Boland and his team pumped over 30 million gallons of water from the tunnel and restored a crucial access point to a city of 8 million people.

Our success was, in part, due to our modernized mission support structure. Perhaps the most important element of mission support is the new Director of Operational Logistics – the D.O.L. – or “Doll” as we like to refer to it.

The DOL actively managed all mission support response resources and directed the efforts of our Incident Recovery Office in New York as well as the thirty-eight separate Deployable Support Elements we sent throughout the region. For the first time, this entire support organization was placed under the operational control of the Atlantic Area commander, providing for swifter and more decisive action than past support efforts.

Electronics Technician First Class Christopher Hazel was part of that mission support. A member of our Coast Guard Reserve, he was activated as soon as the threat posed by Hurricane Sandy became clear. He set up auxiliary generator power – and designated alternate satellite and network connections, restoring critical electronic navigation and communication systems.

And all of this great work was done despite the fact that so many of our local Coast Guardsmen and their families were also impacted by the storm.

Over 200 of our service members and their families were displaced by hurricane Sandy in the New York/New Jersey area alone. Units in other areas were affected as well – yet our Coast Guardsmen performed their duties and demonstrated the real meaning of “selfless service.”

We also took care of our own.

Ms. Casey Van Huysen, is the volunteer Ombudsman at Sector New York. She used every tool available to provide support to our families, filling two vacant housing units with donated goods. She organized other volunteers to sort and inventory the relief supplies and worked with the local Spouses Association to pack the donated goods and deliver them to those in need.

And our volunteer Coast Guard Auxiliarists answered the call. Auxiliarist Doug Dolloian reported to Station Sandy Hook immediately after the storm. He and his team stood watch at the Station's entrance – in the rain and cold – for over three weeks. He then led a team of Auxiliarists to begin repairing storm damage and helped return the Station to normal operations. He has over 4000 hours volunteering with the Coast Guard.

Auxiliarist Dolloian and the others I mentioned – CDR Sturgis, Senior Chief Lepere, Chief Boland, Petty Officer Haba, Petty Officer Hazel, Mr. Weller, and Ms. Van Huysen – are here with us today, representing all of the members of our Coast Guard family who worked so hard. Please stand up!

So that is the source of my confidence: our Coast Guard men and women. And in the tragedy of Hurricane Sandy, we saw the very best of our Coast Guard. All elements of our Service came together and worked as a single team. That's what we do best.

In my first State of the Coast Guard Address, just over two years ago, I told you we were going to take a fix of our position.

Based on that fix I set forth my Commandant's Direction, setting a course that would Steady the Service, Honor our Profession, Strengthen our Partnerships, and Respect our Shipmates while focusing on our priorities:

Sustaining Mission Excellence,  
Recapitalizing and Building Capacity,  
Enhancing Crisis Response and Management, and  
Preparing for the Future.

In my second State of the Coast Guard address, I told you that while we were continuing on course, we were navigating uncertain and stormy seas. Our nation was making difficult but necessary decisions to enable us to cut our deficit and put our fiscal house in order.

That reality still exists.

Anywhere you look in the media, you will see that we continue to maneuver in those uncertain and stormy seas, and they may very well increase before they abate.

And one thing I've learned is that you can't change the weather. You can only adapt to it.

So how are we adapting as a Service? What is the State of our Coast Guard?

Thanks to the incredible efforts of our people, we have made great progress despite the challenges we have faced.

Today I am releasing my Commandant's Situation Report – or SITREP. I encourage you all to read it. This SITREP reports in detail on the work we have done on our Service's priorities and objectives from the Commandant's Direction, and the key work on the course ahead.

And as we move forward on that work, Proficiency must remain our enduring anchor: Proficiency in Craft, Proficiency in Leadership, and Disciplined Initiative.

We must master these three things. There is no short cut. In a Service where we hold the lives of our shipmates – and others – in our hands, our standard must be – and is – excellence!

Proficiency has five elements... the first two are the Service's obligation to individual Coast Guardsmen.

First we provide: Training, education, qualification and certification.

Then, once qualified we provide: Advanced knowledge, experience and seasoning.

We will continue to provide these to our people. But I am increasingly concerned that shrinking budgets have impacted our ability to hold courses, pay for travel and training, and provide the necessary extra boat and aircraft hours. We must continually seek smarter – more innovative – and more economical ways to provide these experiences. Our people deserve it and our service to the public demands it.

The other three elements of proficiency, we own as individuals. Each of us is duty bound to perform these elements ourselves – for the good of the Nation, our Service, and our Shipmates:

The first of these is self-discipline and voluntary adherence to a set of rules or standards.

Next is sustained drive to achieve higher levels of excellence.

And finally, the continuous pursuit of mastery of craft.

What does that look like?

I see it here today in the front row with our Hurricane Sandy Coast Guardsmen who continue to strive for mastery of craft.

Their actions also demonstrate Disciplined Initiative – the ability to improvise and innovate while balancing risk versus benefit – another enduring anchor of our Service.

I told you about our efforts in Hurricane Sandy – and about the success of our reorganization to Sectors – and the creation of the DOL and the mission support organization. Let me highlight two other areas for you...

Sustaining Mission Excellence remains our highest priority. In keeping with that priority, we continue to make significant progress integrating our Deployable Specialized Forces —DSF— with our Shore Based Forces and Maritime Patrol Forces – to form what is referred to in Publication 3.0 as our Maritime Trident of Forces.

Two years ago I directed a Stem-to-Stern review of these deployable forces to build and sustain them as a more proficient and permanent component of the Trident.

As the Coast Guard expanded its deployable forces after the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the Deployable Operations Group – or the DOG – was created to fully develop those forces and improve proficiency. I am proud of the leadership of the Deployable Operations Group commanders and staff over the past six years conducting this mission. Because of their work, we have an incredibly capable force and we are now ready to evolve the way we organize, train and operate DSF – within our new budget realities.

We will shift command and control of all Deployable Specialized Forces to the senior operational commanders at the Area level. This will fully integrate them with shore based-forces and maritime patrol forces. This synchronization of forces reminds us that we are one Coast Guard, one service.

We are also continuing to build on our preparations to meet the challenges of our growing responsibilities in the Arctic.

We recently completed Arctic Shield 2012, a nine-month interagency operation consisting of outreach, operations, and assessment of capabilities, including the deployment of a National Security Cutter and two of our ocean going, ice capable buoy tenders. We also surged two helicopters to Barrow, 300 miles above the Arctic Circle.

Given the lack of shore infrastructure in the remote reaches of the Arctic, our National Security Cutter provided us with an “off-shore infrastructure”. These Cutters carry the supplies needed to provide a sustained presence – they can carry and launch small boats and helicopters to conduct the full range of Coast Guard missions – and they provide a robust suite of communications capabilities. That’s one reason why I am committed to the completion of the National Security Cutter fleet...it is critical to our ability to meet our expanding missions.

Our next priority is to ensure we have the cutters, boats, aircraft and infrastructure necessary to conduct our missions...Recapitalizing and Building Capacity.

No Commandant is ever satisfied with the pace of recapitalization. But considering the new budget realities – we’ve been doing pretty good.

With tremendous support from Secretary Napolitano and our elected officials, we have made significant progress in the recapitalization of our aging fleet. Over the last year I was honored to preside at the commissioning of our first three Fast Response Cutters, and we commissioned our fourth just a week ago. Our fifth will be delivered next month. Eight more are currently in production, and 5 more are under contract.

We are also working to replace our Medium Endurance Cutters. We had a strong response to our Request for Proposals for the new Offshore Patrol Cutter, and we will soon announce the three finalists for that project. This work is desperately needed. Our Medium Endurance Cutters are all well past their service life. The first of our 270 foot Cutters turned thirty this month, and the oldest of our 210 foot Cutters will turn fifty next year. It is only through the determination and resilience of our cuttermen, naval engineers, and the modernized mission support system that they continue to operate.

The state of our High Endurance Cutters is no better, and they begin to turn fifty next year. However, we now have three of their replacements – the National Security Cutters BERTHOLF, WAESCHE, and STRATTON – out doing the nation's work. They are proving to be amazing ships, from interdicting drug and migrant smuggling in the eastern Pacific, to providing command and control, helicopter and boat capabilities and persistent presence in the vast Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea, as well as the Arctic.

We will christen our fourth NSC in October. The keel laying for the fifth NSC will occur in a few short months. And we have awarded the contract for long lead time materials on NSC #6.

We placed the 116th new 'Response Boat-Medium' into operation last week at Coast Guard Station Venice. We completed an overhaul of the Cutter POLAR STAR, returning the Nation's only heavy icebreaker to active service. And to date we've taken delivery of 14 new HC-144 medium range surveillance aircraft. We have our ninth C-130J under contract, are nearly complete with our H-60 helicopter conversion, and have begun production on the prototype for an upgrade to our H-65 helicopters.

These tools are critically important, and I thank the Secretary and our elected officials for their strong support to acquire the cutters, boats and aircraft our Coast Guardsmen deserve and our nation needs.

In order to fund and properly manage these and all of our assets, we have to ensure our fiscal house in order. This was the first year our Service had a full-scope audit of all five of our financial statements and we received a "Qualified" opinion. We are the first of the armed services to achieve this milestone. This effort has placed a significant workload on the entire Coast Guard – and our



Storekeepers, Yeomen, and civilian financial managers in particular, have done tremendous work.

Our goal for 2013 is a “Clean” audit – and we will accomplish this goal!

Another big event for us this year is the move to our new Headquarters. It will be the first time in our over two centuries of service we’ve had a building – designed from the ground up – to be a Coast Guard Headquarters. It’s almost complete, and we move in a few short months.

I’m happy to have some of our new neighbors from Anacostia here with us today, the principals from Eagle Academy Elementary School, Kramer Middle School, and Ballou High School. We have already started to build our Partnership in Education program with these schools and we look forward to being great neighbors and great partners with all of you!

Now, I could easily spend our time today detailing our range of efforts and operational accomplishments over the past year, and I never tire of talking about the great things our Coast Guard does.

Coast Guard men and women have always continued to press forward and provide the services the nation needs.

When the storms drive others to safe harbor, that is when we go out... to rescue those in distress, to enforce the laws, to fight for our nation. It is what we do. But it is not without peril.

Yesterday, I traveled to Training Center Cape May to dedicate a building and memorial honoring Petty Officer Nathan Bruckenthal, killed in operations off Iraq in 2004.

Tomorrow, I travel to Aviation Training Center Mobile to dedicate a memorial to the crew of helicopter 6535. LCDR Dale Taylor, LTJG Thomas Cameron, Chief Petty Officer Fernando Jorge, and Petty Officer Drew Knight were killed in a crash one year ago.

In December, we observed the manners of our profession, as I presided at the memorial service for Senior Chief Boatswains Mate Terrell Horne III, the Executive Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Cutter HALIBUT, who was killed while protecting our shores from illegal smuggling.

During a pre-dawn pursuit off the California coast, when the Cutter HALIBUT’s small boat was about to be rammed by smugglers, Senior Chief Horne, the Boarding Officer, leaned forward into the point of impact and pushed his boat coxswain to safety.

He did what leaders do. He put his crew before himself. He gave his life for his shipmates. Humility... Courage.... Leadership like that is the very *soul* of our service.

Speaking at the memorial for Senior Chief Horne – and spending time talking with his parents, and his wife, and his children – served to reinforce my belief that one of our most sacred duties as leaders is to our people and their families.

Two years ago I announced our Coast Guard family campaign. We have made great progress in our first duty as leaders, taking care of our people. Earlier I introduced Casey Van Huysen, our Ombudsmen at Sector New York. You can see from her efforts how important this program is to our units. We continue to make improvements in our Ombudsman program – with a new Headquarters Program Manager, new Regional Ombudsmen Coordinators working directly for the Area Commanders, and the release of a new policy that will ensure every Coast Guard unit has an ombudsman, or access to one, for the families.

We continue to enhance and expand opportunities for affordable, quality childcare and ensure that our child development centers continue to meet the highest national standards. We are adding new child care providers and spaces so our families can have access to in-home child care at Coast Guard owned and leased housing.

And we are improving housing as well. We completed a National Housing Assessment to inventory Coast Guard owned housing. We assessed availability and suitability of housing and began getting rid of excess or unsuitable housing so we can devote our scarce resources to making renovations to our housing in regions with the greatest need. We are changing policies to increase occupancy of Coast Guard owned housing to better meet the needs of Coast Guard families.

So let me focus now on Coast Guard people.

We are making great strides with the diversity of our workforce.

If you know our history, you know that the Coast Guard itself is built from a mosaic of agencies that blended together over time to form our Service. And we are now far stronger and more capable than any of those prior organizations would have been on their own.

It is the same with our people. We are stronger and better when we have diversity of culture, experience, and viewpoints, in the people who perform our missions. We are making real progress in realizing that promise.

Thirty-seven percent of the young men and women who have joined our active duty ranks this year are under-represented minorities, and twenty-five percent are women.

And these new Coast Guard men and women are some of the best we've ever seen.

The Armed Forces Qualification test scores for our new enlisted members lead the five military services, and well over half of our new members have college experience.

And of those granted early admission to the Coast Guard Academy, over one-third are women, and almost a quarter are under-represented minorities. Fourteen percent of them finished first or second in their class, and over one-third are in the top five percent of their high school class!

No wonder why I'm so optimistic about our future!

But in spite of my optimism, problems remain. While I am incredibly proud of all of the things we've done to keep our Service sound, we still must eliminate those things that have no part in our Coast Guard: sexual assault, hazing, harassment, and alcohol abuse – or any other activity that is contrary to our Core Values. These behaviors undermine our morale, degrade our readiness, damage our mission performance, and break our obligation to one another and our nation.

As I told you in Shipmates Message 19, as Coast Guardsmen we each have a duty to respect our Shipmates. And that duty demands courage.

And we are making progress. Our Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Task Force completed a year of work to identify the problems – and propose solutions. Our Sexual Assault Prevention Council will direct implementation of the Task Force recommendations and coordinate service-wide efforts to eliminate sexual assault from our Service.

We are emphasizing education and training, improving our response capability and victim support network, and ensuring accountability for those who engage in this violent crime – or those who allow it to occur.

Remember, there are no bystanders in our Coast Guard. I need all of you to help me with this.

We will eliminate sexual predators from our midst. We will protect our shipmates and hold predators accountable. And I reject the assertion of some experts that sexual assault is an unavoidable element of military service culture. Not in my Coast Guard.

We will also continue combat the insidious problem of alcohol abuse. This demands the attention of every member of our Service.

We have published new direction for our Substance Abuse and Treatment program, and we are focusing our efforts on early and proactive intervention for “at risk” behavior. We will intervene early to help those who show signs of alcohol abuse. And we will exercise leadership to set the example—at all levels.

It is only by eliminating those things that are inconsistent with our Core Values and taking care of our people that we will be prepared to meet the promise of our future.

We must commit ourselves today – and every day – to prepare for that future.

One example of what our future holds can be seen in the emerging frontier of the Arctic, where there is a new ocean appearing. In September we observed the lowest sea ice extent in recorded history, and there are vast areas of open water where there used to be ice.

Because of this, activity in the most remote reaches of Alaska continues to evolve and grow, including planned drilling operations in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, foreign tankers using the northern sea routes which transit through the Bering Strait and Sea, and small cruise ships pressing even further into the Arctic.

As the receding ice increasingly gives way to commercial ventures, and human and economic presence increases, so do our responsibilities.

We must continue to refine our ability to provide – and then support – a persistent operational presence during periods of increasing human activity and environmental risk. Operations in this environment demand specialized capabilities and personnel trained and equipped to operate in extreme climates.

I am pleased to announce that next month we plan to release the first comprehensive Coast Guard Arctic Strategy. The strategy will focus on three main priorities:

- 1) Improving Arctic awareness,
- 2) Modernizing governance, and
- 3) Broadening partnerships.

But, at the same time, we have to balance operations in this new ocean with our other missions and competing priorities, in a resource-strained environment.

I told you when I started today that this was a challenging time. But it is also a consequential time. Our presence, both in the Arctic and elsewhere, is important.

As we continue our work in the Arctic, as we conduct fisheries patrols in the vast U.S. exclusive economic zone and enforce the ban on high seas drift nets in the Pacific, as we fight maritime drug smuggling and human trafficking, as we respond to natural disasters like hurricane Sandy and low water levels on the Mississippi, and manmade ones like Deep Water Horizon, and as we ensure the safe and secure flow of commerce through our ports and along our inland waterways...we must remember that these are not discrete, unrelated actions.

These activities, like all of our missions, are much more than the sum of their parts. They define us as one Coast Guard.

People are often surprised to hear that the same Coast Guard that is rescuing mariners off the coast of North Carolina, managing oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico, teaching boating safety in Florida, and maintaining Aids to Navigation along the Mississippi – is the same Coast Guard that is doing joint boardings off the coast of Africa, patrolling the Arabian Gulf, interdicting smugglers off of South America, or breaking ice in Antarctica.

That sense of surprise reveals a misunderstanding of what we do and our value to the country.

Human activity affecting our nation – both lawful and illicit – continues to expand. More than ninety-five percent of global commerce is carried by sea. Well over one million seafarers serve on commercial ships and over two billion passengers board ferries and cruise ships around the world. New energy exploration is planned in the arctic and off the shores of Cuba. And a newly expanded Panama Canal, along with the opening of the Arctic Ocean, has the potential to alter worldwide shipping routes and bring an even greater number of increasingly larger ships to our ports.

Our missions ensure adherence to a system of rules and sustain the mechanisms designed to provide for the security, safety and prosperity of our nation and all those who use the maritime domain. This is the daily work of government that provides us with both order and opportunity on the oceans.

In short, what we are doing is providing Maritime Governance. I believe that one measure of a nation's greatness is the resources it provides for mariners to safely and securely approach its shores. That is maritime governance. And it is critical to our National Security.

When we think of National Security, especially in the maritime environment, we often think of National Defense and the work of our Navy and our Marine Corps. They provide for control of the sea by naval supremacy, deterring aggression, projecting power, and fighting and winning America's wars.

And the Coast Guard is part of that. We have long proud history of filling those roles where our special expertise is needed.

But we are more than a military service, and National Security is more than National Defense. It is economic security, energy security, environmental security, the security of our ports...our Homeland Security. While our role in the National Defense Strategy is relatively small, we are the leaders in that broader understanding of National Security in the maritime domain, and we are the strong maritime arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

There is a broader range of persistent threats, from both human and natural adversaries, that are not easily subject to the military power of our Defense Department counterparts.

Oils spills in the Gulf of Mexico; tanker groundings in the Gulf of Alaska, depletion of the fish stocks that feed our Nation, disruption of traffic into our ports, the flow of illegal drugs and migrants, the list goes on and on...

These and a host of other threats impede trade, weaken our economy and create instability. They disrupt regional and global security, the economies of partner nations, access to resources and international trade. All of these are vital elements of our national prosperity.

And it is this prosperity which spurs investment and global development, provides jobs, and provides the resources to pay for both our national security and our national defense.

Our activities in the maritime domain enhance our security, reinforce the rule of law, support stability at home and abroad, and increase our prosperity.

I was reminded of the unique value and nature of our service recently by an Article entitled "The Need for a Unified Coast Guard."

I was a little taken aback when I first saw the title of this article. As I just described, I am proud of the fact that we already have a unified Coast Guard.

Then I realized the article was not talking about our Coast Guard. It was talking about the Chinese maritime forces.

It made the point that China is unable to deliver affirmative maritime governance. Chinese maritime forces are spread between five different government ministries – each with a separate focus. Because of this, the article asserts, they are inefficient and lack the synchronization, unity of command, and common culture necessary to make them an effective maritime governance force.

It made the point that they should model their forces after the most powerful Coast Guard in the world – the U.S. Coast Guard!

We used to suffer from the same problem. There was a time in our history when *our* duties were performed by five different government agencies. The Revenue Cutter Service. The Lifesaving Service. The Lighthouse Service. The Steamboat Inspection Service. And the Bureau of Navigation.

Fortunately, our country realized a long time ago that bringing these organizations together to unify their missions, authorities, and capabilities would make for a far more capable and efficient force than any of those organizations would have been on their own. We may not have thought in terms of maritime governance then, but that is exactly what we were providing for. And we set the standard for the rest of the world. You can see this as other Coast Guards and small navies seek to replicate our model.

Off the coasts of nations all over the world, you see ships painted white with a diagonal colored stripe down the side. And instead of “U.S. Coast Guard”, they say “Japan Coast Guard” or “Guardia Costiera” or “Salvamento Marítimo” or “Küstenwache”.

This is a recognition of the value our unified Coast Guard provides in securing and maintaining the prosperity and security of our nation.

And just as the value we provide the nation is greater than the sum of the services we provide, who we are is greater than a list of our missions.

We have been seen as many things by many people and we’ve even defined and labeled ourselves with slogans: Life-Savers. Smokies of the Sea. Warriors. Guardians. Small Service-Big Job. An Armed Service and More...

All of these slogans are accurate; none of them is enough.

Because, in truth, we are simply what we have always been: ***We are Coast Guardsmen.***

When I began this morning, I told you that I see the world as a Coast Guardsman. I said that while we still sail in uncertain and stormy seas, I learned long ago that the wind and seas are simply beyond our control.

What *is* in our control is how we navigate through those seas.

I was reminded of this recently when talking to our Cadets at the Coast Guard Academy. After my remarks, I got a question from one of our fourth class cadets. Her name is Hayley Smith.

I asked her to be with us here today, as I did with Seaman Recruit Jerome Johnson, a member of Recruit Company TANGO 187 from Training Center Cape May. I had the chance to meet him yesterday at the dedication Bruckenthal Hall. Seaman Recruit Johnson graduates from Recruit Training on Friday and will be assigned to the Coast Guard Cutter MORAY out of Jonesport, Maine.

Together they represent our future. They personify the commitment and optimism that sustains our Service.

They come to us wanting to believe; to be a part of something bigger than themselves. But they also come with a healthy dose of skepticism towards institutions, due to notable failures of both leaders and organizations while they were growing up... It's up to us as leaders to ensure our Coast Guard is worthy of their commitment.

Cadet Smith had obviously been reading the news, and she asked me about the current fiscal situation.

I'm afraid I started by giving her a civics lesson. I explained the budget process and told her that this was the worst fiscal mess I had seen in my career – and that with the threat of sequestration, the debt ceiling, and the continuing resolution, we were facing a fiscal “perfect storm.”

And while that answer wasn't wrong, it didn't really get to the heart of her question.

You see, what she was really concerned about was the impact to our Coast Guard. As a fourth class cadet – a freshman – she was concerned about the future of the organization she and Seaman Recruit Johnson had committed to.

So I went on to tell her that our Service's value to the nation is enduring. It's true the challenges we face are real, and like everyone in our government we may be asked to do less with less, or at least do the same work with different means. But there will be a place for her – and for our Coast Guard – today, tomorrow and as far into the future as I can see....to the horizon, and beyond.

Her question, and what I told her, helped me to think about our current fiscal realities, how it is impacting our service – and how I might respond to that question in the future. And I got my chance.

A week later I received the same question from a reporter, obviously looking for a provocative headline. I told him I acknowledge that we have fiscal challenges, but we also have to understand that their origin and existence are simply beyond the Coast Guard's control.

Just as the sea – and the weather it brings – is always beyond our control.



All I can do – in fact, all we can do – is prepare and adapt – and keep moving forward.

Our job – our mission – is to set a course for the Service. We must put our efforts into moving forward, prudently navigating towards the horizon

When young Coast Guardsmen first feel the roll of the sea and the deck moving beneath them, and they start to get that uneasy feeling in the pit of their stomach, the first thing we tell them is to watch the horizon. It steadies them, and restores their sense of balance and equilibrium.

But even after that feeling passes, and we become used to the pitching deck, we continue to watch that horizon ---. It is where you first see the masts of an approaching ship and the signs of whether it is friend or foe---. It is where you first see the change in the water that lets you know that shoals may be ahead.

But it's also where you first see the break in the clouds or the shift in the winds – and the path through those uncertain and stormy seas. It's where the sun rises and sets and where the stars we use to navigate first appear.

For that reason, we will always move *forward*, towards the horizon....

Of course we'll never reach it; because over every horizon awaits another.

And that is the promise that drives us forward.

And we do this because we are Coast Guardsmen.

This is our chosen profession.

This is our way.

This is what we do

Semper Paratus.